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AN ESSAY ON THE CIVIL WARS OF FRANCE,

Extracted from

CURIOUS MANUSCRIPTS.

By the Celebrated

Monſ. DE VOLTAIRE,

Author of the Hiſtory of CHARLES XII.

AND THE

Letters concerning the *Engliſh* Nation.

Men, Women, and Children are promiſcuouſly ſlaughter'd; every Street was ſtrawn with expiring Bodies: Some Prieſts holding up a Crucifix in one Hand, and a Sword in the other, ran at the Head of the Murderers, and encouraged them, in the Name of God, to ſpare neither Relations nor Friends.

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LONDON,

Printed for M. COOPER at the *Globe* in *Pater-noſter-row*. MDCCXLV.

[Price Six Pence.]

BRITISH MUSEUM

AN ESSAY ON THE CIVIL WARS OF FRANCE.

HENRY the Great, King of *France*, was born in the Year 1553, in *Pau*, a ſmall Town, the Capital of *Bearn*; his Father *Anthony* of *Bourbon*, Duke of *Vendome*, was of the Royal Blood, and the Head of that Branch call'd *Bourbon*, which formerly ſignify'd *Muddy*, from a Place ſo call'd, which fell to their Family by a Marriage with an Heireſs of that Name.

The Houſe of *Bourbon*, from *Lewis* IX. down to *Henry* IV. had been almoſt always neglected, and reduced to ſuch a degree of Poverty, that the famous Prince of *Conde*, Brother to *Anthony* of *Navarre*, and Uncle to *Henry* the Great, had not Six hundred Pounds a Year of his own.

The Mother of *Henry* was *Jeanne d'Albret*, Daughter to *Henry d'Albret*, King of *Navarre*, a good Man, and a worthleſs Prince, rather ſlothful than peaceable; who bore with too much reſignation the privation of his Kingdom, which had been taken from his Father by the Pope's Bull, ſupported by the Arms of *Spain*.

Jeanne, Daughter to ſo weak a Prince, had yet a weaker Huſband, to whom ſhe brought for a Portion her little Principality of *Bearn*, and the empty Title of King of *Navarre*.

This Prince, who liv'd in a time of Factions and Civil Wars, which required a ſteddy Mind, was always fickle and wavering in his Conduct; he never knew of what Party he was, nor of what Religion; neither fit for a Court, nor qualified to be a General: He ſpent all his Life in courting his Enemies, and in undoing his Servants; deceived by *Catharine* of *Medicis*, baffled and oppreſs'd by the *Guiſes*, nay, cheated always by himſelf. He was mortally wounded at the Siege of *Rouen*, where he was fighting the Cauſe of his Enemies againſt the Intereſt of his own Houſe; and he died, as he had liv'd, uncertain and anxious.

Jeanne d'Albert was quite of an oppoſite Temper, full of Courage and Reſolution, feared by the Court of *France*, beloved by the Proteſtants, eſteemed by both. She knew all the Superior Parts of Policy, but never the mean craft of Intrigue. It is very remarkable, that ſhe turned Proteſtant at the very Time her Husband turned Catholick; but from that Day ſhe was as firmly attached to her new Religion, as *Anthony* was wavering in his. By theſe means ſhe became the Head of one Party, whilſt her Husband was the Slave and Bubble of the other.

She took the Education of her Son entirely into her own hands. *Henry* was born with all the Endowments of his Mother, and he improv'd them eminently afterwards. He had nothing of his Father, except that Eaſineſs of Temper, which in *Anthony* was Uncertainty and Weakneſs, but proved in *Henry* Benevolence and Good-nature.

He was not brought up like a Prince, in that effeminate Pride that enervates the Body, weakens the Underſtanding, and hardens the Heart. His Food was coarſe, his Cloaths plain; he went always bare-

headed, was ſent to School with the young Companions of his Age, climbed up with them among Rocks and Woods to the Tops of the neighbouring Mountains, according to the Cuſtom of that Country, and of thoſe Times.

While he was thus bred up with his Subjects in a ſort of Equality, without which a Prince is too apt to forget he is born a Man; Fortune opened in *France* a bloody Scene, and through the Ruins of that Kingdom almoſt overturned, and, over the Graves of many Princes untimely cut off, prepared him a Way to a Throne, which he was in time to conquer, and to reſtore to its Grandeur.

Henry the Second, King of *France*, the Head of the Branch of *Valois*, was killed at *Paris*, in a Tournament; which was the laſt in *Europe* of theſe romantick and dangerous Sports.

He left four Sons, *Francis* the Second, *Charles* the Ninth, *Henry* the Third, and the Duke *d'Alençon*, all the unworthy Poſterity of the great *Francis* the Firſt; all (except *Alençon*) aſcended the Throne one after another; all lived ſhamefully, died untimely, and without Iſſue.

The Reign of *Francis* the Second was ſhort, but made famous by the firſt breaking out of thoſe Factions, and by the beginning of thoſe Calamities, which laid waſte the Kingdom of *France* thirty Years ſucceſſively.

He was married to that famous and unfortunate *Mary Stuart*, whom her Beauty and Weakneſs led afterwards into great Faults, greater Miſeries, and at laſt to a dreadful Death. She governed entirely her young Husband *Francis*, a Boy of Sixteen, without Vice, and without Virtue, born with an infirm Body, and a weak Mind.

Incapable of governing by herſelf, ſhe was totally directed by the Duke of *Guiſe*, her Mother's Brother; he influenced the King by her means, and laid deep the Foundations of the Grandeur of his own Houſe. *Catherine*

therine de Medicis, the late King's Widow and the preſent King's Mother, began now to ſhew the firſt Sparks of her Ambition, which had been ſtifled during the Life of her Husband: But being unable to prevail with her Son againſt a young Wife, whom he loved paſſionately, and againſt the powerful Credit of the Houſe of *Guiſe*, ſhe thought fit rather to be their Tool for a time, and to eſtabliſh her own Authority by the help of their Power, than to contend in vain againſt it.

Thus the *Guiſes* domineered over the King, and the two Queens; and being Maſters of the Court, were by courſe Maſters of the Kingdom; the one in *France* being generally a neceſſary Conſequence of the other.

The Houſe of *Bourbon* was groaning under the Oppreſſion of the Houſe of *Lorrain*; *Anthony* of *Navarre* bore patiently many ſcandalous Affronts; the Prince of *Conde*, his Brother, ſtill more bitterly abuſed, endeavoured to ſhake off the Yoke. He united in his great Deſigns with the Admiral *Coligne*, the Head of the Houſe of *Chatillon*: Theſe two Men were the moſt terrible Enemies that the Court had to fear; *Conde* more ambitious, and more forward, more reſtleſs; *Coligne* of a more ſedate Temper, ſtricter in his Behaviour, fitter to be the Head of a Party; indeed as unſucceſsful in War as *Conde*, and repairing often by his Wiſdom what ſeemed irreparable; more dangerous after a Defeat, than his Enemies after a Victory; endowed beſides with as great a ſhare of Virtue as thoſe Times could permit, and as the Spirit of Faction could allow.

The Proteſtants began then to grow numerous, and to be conſcious of their Strength.

The Superſtition, the dull ignorant Knavery of the Monks, the overgrown Power of *Rome*, Mens Paſſion for Novelty, the Ambition of *Luther* and *Calvin*, the Policy of many Princes; all theſe had given Riſe and Countenance to this Sect, free indeed from Superſtition, but running as headlong towards Anarchy as the Church of *Rome* towards Tyranny. The Proteſtants

teſtants had been unmercifully perſecuted in *France*; but it is the ordinary effect of Perſecution to make Proſelytes; their Sect increaſed every Day amidſt the Scaffolds and Tortures. *Conde*, *Coligny*, the two Brothers of *Coligny*, all their Adherents, all who were oppreſſed by the *Guiſes*, turned Proteſtants at once; they united their Griefs, their Vengeance, and their Intereſts together, ſo that a Revolution both in the State and in Religion was at hand.

The firſt Enterprize was a Plot to ſeize the *Guiſes* at *Amboiſe*, and to get the Perſon of the King into their hands. The Plot boldly contrived, ſecretly carried on, was diſcovered juſt as it was ready to be put in execution; the *Guiſes* puniſhed the Conſpirators in the moſt cruel manner, in order to terrify their Enemies from the like Attempts hereafter; more than ſeven hundred Proteſtants were executed. *Conde* was made Priſoner, impeached of High-Treaſon, tried, and ſentenced to Death,

During his Trial, King *Anthony* of *Navarre*, his Brother, ſtirred up his Wife, and by the *Colignys*, raiſed in *Guienne* a powerful Number of Gentlemen, as well Proteſtants as Catholicks, attached to his Houſe: He went with this Army through *Gaſcoigne*; but upon a ſingle Meſſage that he received in his way, from the Court, he diſmiſſed 'em all with Tears. *I muſt ſubmit*, ſays he, *but I will obtain your Pardon from the King*. *Go, and aſk Pardon for yourſelf*, anſwered an old Officer, *our Security is in the Point of our Swords*. Whereupon the Nobility, who followed him, returned home with Scorn and Indignation. *Anthony* purſued his Journey to the Court, where he ſollicited for the Life of his Brother, being not ſecure of his own; and he intreated every Day the Duke and the Cardinal of *Guiſe*, who received him ſitting, with their Caps on, whilſt he was bareheaded and ſtanding.

Every thing was now ready for the Death of the Prince of *Conde*, when on a ſudden the King fell ſick

and

and died. The Circumſtances, the Suddenneſs of this Accident, the propenſity of Mankind to believe that the untimely Deaths of Princes are never natural, gave courſe to the general Opinion, that *Francis* the Second had been poiſoned.

His Death gave a new turn to Affairs; the Prince of *Conde* was ſet at Liberty, his Party began to breathe, his Religion was propagated more and more, the Authority of the *Guiſes* declined, tho' not pulled down: *Anthony* of *Navarre* recovered a ſhadow of Authority, which was enough for him; *Mary Stuart* was ſent away into *Scotland*; and *Catherine de Medicis*, who now began to act the firſt Part on the Stage, was declared Regent of the Kingdom, during the Minority of *Charles* the Ninth, her ſecond Son.

She found herſelf intangled in a labyrinth of inextricable Difficulties, between two Religions, and ſeveral Factions ſtruggling with each other, and contending for the Power.

She reſolved to deſtroy them all, if ſhe could by their own Arms; ſhe cultivated the Hatred of the *Condes* againſt the *Guiſes*; ſhe promoted the Civil Wars, indifferent and impartial between the Church of *Rome* and that of *Geneva*, jealous only of her own Authority.

The *Guiſes*, who were zealous Catholicks, becauſe *Conde* and *Coligny* were Proteſtants, were a long while at the Head of the Catholick Troops: Many Battles were fought, the Kingdom was laid waſte by three or four Armies at a Time.

The Conſtable, *Anne de Montmorency*, was killed at the Battle of *St. Denis*, in the Eightieth Year of his Age. *Francis* Duke *de Guiſe* was aſſaſſinated by *Poltrot*, at the Siege of *Orleans*. *Henry* the Third, then Duke of *Anjou*, a great Prince in his Youth, tho' a mean King in his Maturity, gained the Victories of *Jarnac* againſt *Conde*, and of *Moncontour* againſt *Coligny*.

The

The Behaviour of *Conde*, and his Death in the Battle of *Jarnac*, are too remarkable not to be mentioned. He had been wounded in his Arm two Days before, and when he was juſt upon the Point of engaging the Enemy, had the Misfortune to receive a a kick from a vicious Horſe of one of his Officers; his Leg was broken by the blow. The Prince, without expreſſing the leaſt Concern, ſaid to thoſe who were about him: *Gentlemen, learn by this Accident, that prancing Horſes are more dangerous than uſeful in a Day of Battle; let us go on*, purſued he; *the Prince of* Conde, *tho' with a broken Leg, and an Arm wound up, will engage without Fear, when followed by you.* His Courage was not attended with Succeſs, he loſt the Battle, all his Army ran away; his Horſe being killed under him, he ſtood upright as well as he could, againſt a Tree, alone, fainting with the Smart of his Pain, but ſtill undaunted, and his Face turned towards the Enemy. *Monteſquiou*, Captain of the Guards to the Duke of *Anjou*, paſſed by the Place where the unfortunate Prince was ſtanding; he aſked who he was, and being told, 'twas the Prince of *Conde*, ſhot him dead in cold Blood.

After the Death of *Conde*, *Coligny* had upon him all the Burthen of the Party. *Jeanne d'Albret*, then a Widow, committed her Son to his Care; the young *Henry*, at fourteen Years of Age, went with him through all the Toils of War, and Hardſhip and Adverſity were his Tutors.

His Mother and the Admiral had no other View, than to ſettle their Religion in *France* independant from the Church of *Rome*, and to ſecure their own Authority from the Power of *Catherine de Medicis*.

Catherine had got rid already of many of her Rivals; *Francis* Duke of *Guiſe*, who was the more dangerous and obnoxious to her, as he was of the ſame Party, had been aſſaſſinated before the Gates of *Orleans*. His Son, *Henry de Guiſe*, who made afterwards ſo great a Figure in the World, was but young; the

Prince of *Conde* was dead; *Charles* the Ninth, her Son, was broken to her hand, and ſubmiſſive to her Will; the Duke *d' Anjou*, afterwards *Henry* the Third, was intirely in her Intereſt. She feared no other Enemies but *Jeanne d' Albret*, *Coligny*, and the Proteſtants: She thought one Blow could deſtroy them all, and fix her own Power for ever.

She worked up the King, and even the Duke *d' Anjou* to her Deſign; all Things were agreed on, and the Snares prepared; an advantageous Peace was propoſed to the Proteſtants: *Coligny*, tired with the Civil War, accepted of it eagerly. *Charles*, in order to leave no room for any Suſpicion, gave his own Siſter in Marriage to young *Henry* of *Navarre*. *Jeanne d' Albret*, allured by thoſe deceitful Appearances, went with her Son, with *Coligny*, and with all the chief Proteſtants to Court. The Marriage was celebrated with Pomp, all the Endearments, all the Aſſurances of Friendſhip, all the Oaths which are ſacred among Men, were profuſedly beſtowed by *Catherine*, and by the King; the reſt of the Court thought of nothing but Feaſts, Plays, and Maſquerades: At laſt, one Night (which was the Eve of St. *Bartholomew*, in the Month of *Auguſt*, 1572) at twelve o'Clock, the Signal is given, all the Houſes of the Proteſtants are forced open at once; the Admiral *Coligny*, alarmed by the Uproar, riſes out of Bed; a Troop of Aſſaſſines ruſh into his Chamber; one *Beſme*, a *Lorrainer*, bred up a Servant in the Family of *Guiſe*, was at their Head; he thruſts his Sword into the Admiral's Breaſt, and gives him a back Stroke on the Face.

Henry, the young Duke of *Guiſe*, the ſame who framed afterwards the Catholick League, and who was murdered at *Blois*, was at the Door of *Coligny*'s Houſe, waiting for the Aſſaſſination; and cried aloud, *Beſme, is it done?* Immediately the Aſſaſſines threw the Body out of the Window. *Coligny* fell and expired at the Feet of *Guiſe*; the young Man trampled upon him, not that he was drunk with the furious Catholick

Zeal

Zeal of Preſecution, which at that time intoxicated half *France*, but he was prompted by the Spirit of Revenge, which, tho' not generally ſo unmerciful as the Fury of Religion, yet leads often to more baſe Actions.

Mean while all the Friends of *Coligny* are aſſaulted throughout *Paris*; Men, Women, and Children are promiſcuouſly ſlaughtered; every Street was ſtrawn with expiring Bodies: Some Prieſts holding up a Crucifix in one Hand, and a Sword in the other, ran at the Head of the Murderers, and encouraged them in the Name of God, to ſpare neither Relations nor Friends.

Tavannes, Marſhal of *France*, an ignorant ſuperſtitious Soldier, who joined the Fury of Religion to the Rage of Party, rode on Horſeback thro' *Paris*, crying to his Soldiers, *Let Blood, let Blood, bleeding is wholſome in the Month of* Auguſt, *as well as in* May.

The King's Palace was one of the chief Theatres of Murder; for the Prince *Henry* of *Navarre* had his Lodgings in the *Louvre*, and all his Domeſticks were Proteſtants; many of them were killed in their Beds with their Wives; others were flying naked, and purſued by the Soldiers on the Stair-Caſes, through all the Rooms of the Palace, nay even to the King's Anti-Chamber. The young Wife of *Henry* of *Navarre* awakened by the dreadful Uproar, fearing for her Huſband, and for herſelf, ſtruck with Horror, and half dead, runs from her Bed, in order to throw herſelf at the Feet of the King her Brother. She ſcarce had opened the Door of her Chamber, when ſome of her Proteſtant Servants ruſh into it for Refuge; the Soldiers enter after them; they purſue them in the Sight of the Princeſs, one who crept under her Bed was killed there; two others pierced with Halberts, fell at her Feet, and ſhe was all covered with their Blood.

There was a young Nobleman, very much in the King's favour for his comely Air, his Honeſty, and a certain peculiar Happineſs in the Turn of his Converſation.

'Twas the Earl of *la Rochefoucault*, Great-grandfather to the preſent Marquis of *Montendre*, who came over into *England* during another Perſecution, leſs cruel, but not leſs unjuſt. *La Rochefoucault* had ſpent the Evening till eleven a-clock with the King in a pleaſant Familiarity, and had given a looſe to the Sallies of his Imagination with the utmoſt Mirth and Alacrity. The King felt a Remorſe, and was ſtruck with a Start of Compaſſion towards him; he bid him two or three times not to go home, but to lie in his Chamber. *La Rochefoucalt* anſwered, he ſhould go to his Wife. The King preſſed him no further, and ſaid, *Let him go, I ſee God has decreed his Death.* The young Man was maſſacred two Hours after.

Few eſcaped in the general Slaughter; among theſe, the Deliverance of the young *la Force*, is a ſtrange Inſtance of what Men call *Deſtiny*. He was a Boy of ten Years old. His Father, his elder Brother, and he were ſeized together by the Soldiers of the Duke *d'Anjou*. Theſe Murderers fell upon all three promiſcuouſly, and ſtruck them at random; the Father and the Sons, covered with Blood, fell and lay upon one another. The youngeſt received not one Blow, counterfeited to be dead, and made his Eſcape the next Day; his Life, ſo wonderfully preſerved, laſted fourſcore and five Years. He was the ſame famous Marſhal *de la Force*, Uncle to the Duke of *la Force*, the deceaſed Huſband of the preſent Ducheſs *la Force*, who is now in *England*.

Mean while many of thoſe miſerable Victims fled to the River-ſide; ſome were ſwimming over to the *Fauxbourg S. Germain*. The King ſaw them from his Window, which look'd upon the River, and (what is almoſt incredible, but too true) he fired upon them with a Carabine. *Catherine de Medicis*, undiſturbed and ſerene in the midſt of the Slaughter, look'd down from a Balcony ſituated towards the City, encouraged the Aſſaſſins, and laught at the dying Groans of the Murdered: Her Maids of Honour, and ſome Ladies of the Court, went down into the Street, and with an impudent

dent Curioſity tallying with the Abominations of that Age, obſerved the naked Body of one *Soubiſe*, who had been ſuſpected of Impotency, and was juſt then killed under the Queen's Windows.

The Court reeking with the Blood of the Nation, tried ſome Days after to palliate ſuch a Crime with Forms of Law. They juſtified the Maſſacres with a Calumny; they imputed to the Admiral, a Conſpiracy which no body believed. The Parliament was ordered to proceed againſt the Memory of *Coligny*, his dead Body was hanged in Chains at the Gallows of *Montfaucon*. The King himſelf went to ſee that loathſome Spectacle, and as one of his Courtiers adviſed him to retire, and complained of the Stench of the Corpſe, the King anſwered, *A dead Enemy ſmells ſweet*.

That the Head of the Admiral was ſent afterwards to the Pope, is a thing which cannot be proved. Certain it is that the Maſſacres of St. *Bartholomew*'s Day are painted at *Rome* in the Royal Hall of the *Vatican*, with theſe Words under the Picture, *Pontifex Colignii necem probat*.

Young *Henry* of *Navarre* was ſpared rather by the Policy, than by the Pity of *Catherine*, who detained him a Priſoner, till the King's death, in order to make him a Security and a Pledge for the Submiſſion of the Proteſtants who ſhould eſcape.

As to *Jeanne d'Albret*, ſhe died ſuddenly two or three Days before, and tho' perhaps her Death was natural, 'twas not a raſh Opinion to believe her to have been poiſoned; ſince one *Renato*, a Perfumer, who was come over from *Florence* in *Catherine*'s Retinue, boaſted of having ſold poiſoned Gloves to *Jeanne d'Albret* ſome Days before her Death.

However the Execution was not confined alone to the City of *Paris*, the ſame Orders were ſent from the Court to the Governors of all the Provinces of *France*; ſo that in a Week's Time, more than a Hundred Thouſand Proteſtants were maſſacred all over the Kingdom.

Two or three Governors only refuſed to comply with

with the King's Orders; one among others, called *Montmorrin*, Governor of *Auvergne*, wrote to the King the following Letter, which deſerves to be tranſmitted to Poſterity:

SIR,

I have received an Order under your Majeſty's Seal to put to death all the Proteſtants in my Province. I have too much Reſpect for your Majeſty not to believe the Letter is counterfeited; but, if (what God forbid) the Order is truly yonrs, I have too much Reſpect for your Majeſty to obey it.

Thoſe Maſſacres wrought in the Proteſtants, who eſcaped, Rage inſtead of Terror; their irreconcilable Hatred againſt the Court ſeem'd to ſupply them with new Vigour, and the Spirit of Revenge increaſed their Strength.

Not long after the King was taken with a ſtrange Sickneſs, which carried him off in two Years. His Blood was daily ſtealing out, and guſhing through the Pores of his Skin. Such an unaccountable Diſtemper, which was ſo much above the Knowledge and the Skill of Phyſicians, was look'd upon as a Divine Vengeance, as if the Blood of a Prince could atone for the Blood of ſo many thouſand innocent Men.

During the Sickneſs of *Charles*, his Brother *Anjou* had been elected King of *Poland*, on account of the great Reputation which he had happily obtain'd when he was a General, and which he loſt, when a King.

As ſoon as he knew of his Brother's Death, he ſtole away from *Poland*, and ran into *France*, to enjoy the dangerous Inheritance of a Kingdom ſhattered by Factions, fatal to its Sovereigns, and ſtained with the Blood of its Inhabitants. He found at his Arrival, nothing but Parties and Calamities, which he increas'd to the laſt degree.

Henry, then King of *Navarre*, headed the Proteſtants, and gave new Life to their Party. On the oth

other Side, the young Duke of *Guiſe* began to dazzle the Eyes of the World with his great and dangerous Qualities; he had a Genius more enterprizing than his Father. He ſeem'd beſides to have a fair Opportunity of aiming at that Pitch of Grandeur to which his Father had opened the Way.

Anjou, now *Henry* the Third, was reputed unable to get Children, becauſe of the Infirmities, which the Debauches of his Youth had brought upon him. *Henry* of *Navarre* was the lawful Heir of the Crown. *Guiſe* try'd to ſecure it to himſelf, (at leaſt after the Death of *Henry* the Third) and to wreſt it from the Houſe of *Capet*, as formerly the *Capets* had uſurped it from the Deſcendants of *Charlemagne*, and as the Father of *Charlemagne* from his lawful Sovereign.

Never did ſo bold an Undertaking ſeem ſo well and ſo happily laid. *Henry* of *Navarre*, and all the Houſe of *Bourbon*, were Proteſtants. *Guiſe* began to ingratiate himſelf with the Nation by the outward ſhew of a Catholick Zeal. His Liberality ſecured to him the common People; he had all the Clergy at his Devotion, Friends in the Parliament, Spies at Court, Servants throughout all the Kingdom. His firſt politic Step was to make an Aſſociation, under the Name of the *Holy League*, againſt the Proteſtants, for the Security of the Catholick Religion; half the Kingdom came with eagerneſs into that new Project. Pope *Sixtus Quintus* bleſſed the League, and ſupported it as a new *Romiſh* Militia. *Philip* the Second, King of *Spain*, according to the Policy of all Sovereigns, who always help on the Ruin of their Neighbours, gave all ſorts of Encouragement to the League, in order to rend *France* to Pieces, and enrich himſelf with its Spoils.

Thus *Henry* being ſtill an Enemy to the Proteſtants, found himſelf betray'd by the Catholicks; ſurrounded with ſecret and open Foes, and overpower'd by a Subject, who, tho' ſubmiſſive in appearance, was really more King than himſelf.

The only way, perhaps, to emerge from theſe Difficulties,

ficulties, were to joyn with *Henry* of *Navarre*, whoſe Fidelity, Courage, and indefatigable Spirit, was the only Match for *Guiſe*, and who could ſecure to the King all the Proteſtant Party, which would have thrown much Weight into the Balance.

The King over-ruled by *Guiſe* (whom he diſtruſted, but durſt not provoke) terrified by the Pope, betray'd by his Counſellors, and by his wrong Policy, took the contrary way. He put himſelf at the Head of the *Holy League*, in hopes to maſter it: He united with *Guiſe*, his Rebel Subject, againſt his Succeſſor, and his Brother-in-law, whom Nature and true Policy pointed for his Ally.

Henry of *Navarre* was now in *Gaſcogne* at the head of a little Army, while a ſtrong Body of Troops was coming to his Relief from the Proteſtant Princes of *Germany*, thro' the Borders of *Lorrain*.

The King imagined that he could at once reduce the *Narvarrois*, and ſink *Guiſe*; in order to that, he ſent the latter with a ſmall inconſiderable Army againſt the *Germans*, by whom he had like to have been overcome.

At the ſame time he cauſed his Favourite *Joyeuſe* to march againſt the *Navarrois*, with the Flower of the *French* Nobility, and with one of the ſtrongeſt Armies that had appeared in the Field ſince *Francis* I. He was diſappointed in all his Hopes; *Henry* of *Navarre* defeated intirely at *Coutras* his powerful Army, and *Guiſe* got the better of the *Germans*.

The only uſe the *Navarrois* made of his Victory, was to offer a ſure Peace to the Kingdom, and his Aſſiſtance to the King; but he was refus'd, tho' Conqueror, becauſe the King was ſtill more afraid of his Subjects than of him.

Guiſe return'd victorious to *Paris*; he was receiv'd like the Saviour of the Nation, his Party grew more audacious, the King more deſpis'd, inſomuch that *Guiſe* ſeem'd to have triumph'd over him more than over the *Germans*.

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The King preſs'd on every ſide, awak'd from his Lethargy, but too late; he try'd to humble the League, he deſign'd to ſeize ſome of the moſt ſeditious Citizens, he had the Courage to forbid *Guiſe* to come to *Paris*; but he felt, at his own Expence, what it is to command without Power. *Guiſe* came to *Paris* in defiance of his Orders; the Citizens roſe up in Arms, the King's Guards were taken Priſoners, and himſelf inveſted in his Palace. Men are ſeldom good or bad enough. Had *Guiſe* attempted that Day againſt the Liberty or the Life of the King, he had been, in all likelihood Maſter of *France:* but he let him eſcape after having beſieged him; and thus he did too much and too little.

Henry III. fled to *Blois*, where he held the general States of the Kingdom.

Theſe States reſemble the Parliament of *Great Britain* in their Convocation, but are very different from it in their Operations; as they are very ſeldom call'd, they have no Rules to guide them: they are generally made up of Men who never having been in any regular Meeting, know not how to behave themſelves; and 'tis rather a Confuſion than an Aſſembly.

Guiſe did not ſtick at going to *Blois* to defy his Sovereign before the Repreſentatives of the Nation, after having expelled him from his Capital.

Henry and he made a ſolemn Reconciliation. They went together to the ſame Altar, they receiv'd the Communion together; the one ſwore to forget all paſt Injuries, the other to be for ever true and obedient: And at that very Time the King intended to put *Guiſe* to death, and *Guiſe* to dethrone the King.

Guiſe was ſufficiently warn'd to beware of *Henry*; but he deſpis'd him ſo much, as not to think him bold enough, even to attempt an Aſſaſſination. This Raſhneſs betray'd him. The King was reſolved to be revenged on him, and upon his Brother the Cardinal of *Guiſe*, the Partner of his ambitious Deſigns, and the moſt ardent Promoter of the League. He provided

Daggers himſelf, and diſtributed them to ſome *Gaſcoons*, who offered to be the Miniſters of his Vengeance. They murdered *Guiſe* in the King's Cloſet; but theſe very Men who poniarded him, refuſed to embrue their Hands in the Blood of his Brother, becauſe he was a Prieſt and a Cardinal; as if the Life of one who wears a Band and a Caſſock were more ſacred than that of one who wears a ſhort Veſt and a Sword.

The King met with four common Soldiers, who, as the Jeſuit *Maimbourg* ſays, having not ſo much Honour as the aforeſaid Gentlemen, killed the Cardinal for an hundred Crowns a-piece.

The two Brothers were put to death under *Catharine* of *Medicis'* Apartment, but ſhe was totally ignorant of her Son's Deſign, being at that time diſtruſted by all Parties, and forſaken even by the King.

Had ſuch a Vengeance been perpetrated with the Formalities of the Law, which are the natural Inſtruments of the Juſtice of Kings, or the natural Veil to their Iniquity, it had terrified the League; but as it wanted that ſolemn Form, it was look'd upon as a villainous Murder, and did but exaſperate the Party. The Blood of the *Guiſes* invigorated the Strength of the League, as the Death of *Coligny* had given a new Life to the Proteſtants. Many Towns in *France* declared openly againſt the King; he went immediately to *Paris*, but he found the Gates ſhut againſt him, and all the City in Arms.

The famous Duke of *Mayenne*, younger Brother to the late Duke of *Guiſe* was then in *Paris*. He was eclips'd by the Glory of *Guiſe* during his Life; but after his Death, he prov'd as dangerous a Foe as his Brother; for all his Qualities were as great, tho' not ſo ſhining.

The Houſe of *Lorrain* was very numerous in *Paris*. The mighty Name of *Guiſe*, their Magnificence, their Liberality, their apparent Zeal for the Catholick Religion, had made them the Darlings of the City. Prieſts, Burgeſſes, Women, Magiſtrates, Soldiers, all

united

united vigorouſly with *Mayenne* in the purſuit of a Vengeance that was thought very juſt.

The Duke's Widow preſented a Petition to the Parliament againſt *Henry* as a Murderer. The Trial began according to the common Form of Law; two Counſellors were appointed to draw up the Articles of Impeachment againſt the King, but the Parliament did not proceed further, the Heads of that Aſſembly being firmly attached to the Royal Cauſe.

The Doctors of *Sorbonne* were not ſo cautious. Seventy of that Society iſſued forth a Writ, by which *Henry de Valois* was deprived of his Right to the Crown; and the Oaths of Allegiance were diſſolved.

But the moſt dangerous Enemies to the Royal Authority, were ſome private Burgeſſes of *Paris*, called the *Sixteen*; not becauſe of their Number, for they were Forty, but from the Sixteen Wards of *Paris*, which they had divided among themſelves to rule over. The moſt conſiderable of theſe Citizens, was one *le Clerc*, who had aſſumed the great Name of *Buſſi*. He was a bold Burgeſs, and a bad Soldier like his Aſſociates. Theſe Sixteen had got an abſolute Power, and grew at laſt as inſupportable to the Duke of *Mayenne* himſelf, as terrible to the King.

Moreover, the Prieſts, who have ever been the Trumpeters of all the Revolutions in the World, thundered in the Pulpit, and aſſured, in the Name of God, that whoſoever ſhould attempt to kill the Tyrant, ſhould go infallibly to Heaven. The ſacred and dangerous Name of *Ehud*, of *Judith*, and all the Aſſaſſinations which the holy Scripture hath conſecrated were then cried out every where into the Ears of the Nation.

The King, in ſuch an Extremity, was forced at laſt to call to his Aid the ſame *Navarrois*, whoſe Help he had refuſed before. This Prince was better pleaſed to ſupport his Brother, and his King, than to have vanquiſhed him

He brought his Army over to the King, but before his Troops were arrived, he went forward to him, followed by a ſingle Page. The King was amazed at ſuch a piece of Generoſity, which he had himſelf been uncapable of.

However, the two Kings marched to *Paris* at the Head of a very powerful Army. The Town was not in a condition to reſiſt. The League was upon the brink of Ruin when a young Fryar of the Order of St. *Dominic*, changed the whole Face of Affairs.

His Name was *James Clement*, born in a Village of *Burgundy*, called *Sorbonne*, and then Four and twenty Years of Age. His ſurly Piety, and melancholy Mind, had been worked up to *Enthuſiaſm* by the common Cry of the Prieſts. He took upon him to be the Deliverer and the Martyr of the holy League. He diſcovered his Deſign to his Friends, and to his Superiors; all encouraged him, and made a Saint of him before-hand. *Clement* prepar'd himſelf for his Undertaking; he faſted, ſpent whole Nights in Prayer, confeſs'd his Sins, receiv'd the Sacrament, bought a good Dagger, and went away to *S. Cloud*, where the King had his Quarters. He aſked for admittance to the King, under pretence of revealing an important Secret, which could allow of no delay. Being brought before his Majeſty, he kneeled down, and with a bluſhing Modeſty delivered into his Hands a Letter, which he pretended was writ by the firſt Preſident, *Achilles de Harlay*. As the King was peruſing the Letter, the Fryar ſtabb'd him in the Belly, and left the Dagger ſticking in the Wound; then, with an unconcerned Look, croſſed his Hands over his Breaſt and lifted up his Eyes to Heaven, waiting for the Event, without ſtirring.

The King cries out, riſes up, ſnatches the Dagger from his own Belly, and thruſts it into the Forehead of the Murderer.

Many Courtiers ruſh in at the Noiſe. It had been

their Duty to ſecure the Fryar, and reſerve him for Examination and Torture, in order to a Diſcovery of his Accomplices. But they kill'd him on the Spot, with a Precipitaion that laid them under the Suſpicion of having known too much of his Deſign.

Henry of *Navarre* was now King of *France* by his Birth-right; part of the Army acknowledged him, and part forſook him.

Duke *d'Epernon*, and ſome others, retired; alledging they were too good Catholicks, to fight for a King who did not go to Maſs. The ſecretly hoped that a total Subverſion of the Kingdom (which they wiſh'd for, and relied on) would give them an Opportunity of making themſelves Sovereigns in their reſpective Manors.

Mean while, the Deed of *Clement* was approved at *Rome*, and himſelf worſhipped in *Paris*. The *Holy League* acknowledged for their King the Cardinal of *Bourbon*, an old Prieſt, Uncle to *Henry* the Fourth; in order to ſhew the World, that it was the Hereticks, and not the Houſe of *Bourbon*, which their hatred purſued.

Thus the Duke of *Mayenne* was wiſe enough not to aſſume the Title of King, yet to get all the Royal Power in his Hands; while the miſerable Cardinal of *Bourbon*, whom the *League* call'd King, was kept Priſoner by *Henry* the Fourth during the remainder of his Life, which laſted but two Years.

The League, more ſupported than ever by the Pope, aſſiſted by the *Spaniards*, and extremely powerful by itſelf, was at the Height of its Grandeur; and look'd down upon *Henry* the Fourth with that hatred which Religion inſpires, and with a Contempt begot by their Succeſſes.

Henry had few Friends, few great Towns, no Money, a ſmall Army; but his Courage, his Activity, his Policy, ſupplied all thoſe Wants. He gained ſeveral Victories, eſpecially that of *Ivry* againſt *Mayenne*,

Mayenne. This Battle was one of the moſt remarkable that ever was fought. The two Generals exerted on that Day all their Art, the Soldiers all their Courage, few Faults were committed on either Side. *Henry* ow'd at laſt the Victory to the Superiority of his Knowledge and Valour; but he confeſs'd that *Mayenne* had fulfill'd all the Duties of a great General. *He was*, ſaid the King, deficient only *in his Cauſe.*

He prov'd as clement in the Victory as he was terrible in the Battle. He knew beſides, that Power is often leſſened by the full Uſe of it, and extended by Moderation. He ſtopp'd the Fury of the Soldiers who were purſuing the Enemy, he took Care of the wounded, ſet at Liberty many Priſoners. Yet ſo much Valour, and ſo much Generoſity did not mollify the Heart of the League.

The Civil Wars of *France*, were now become the Quarrel of *Europe*. King *Philip* the Second was eagerly engaged in the Defence of the League: Queen *Elizabeth* gave all ſorts of Aſſiſtance to *Henry*, not becauſe he was an Enemy to *Philip* the Second, whoſe incroaching Power was dangerous to herſelf: She ſent him five thouſand Men under the command of the Earl of *Eſſex* her Favourite, the ſame whom ſhe cauſed afterwards to be beheaded.

The King continued the War with various Succeſs: In one Day he took by Storm all the Suburbs of *Paris*. He had taken the Town perhaps likewiſe, had he had no other View but to conquer. But he was afraid of giving up his Capital as a Prey to the Soldiery, and of deſtroying the City which he had a mind to ſave. He beſieged *Paris*, he raiſed the Siege, he began it again, at laſt he block'd it up, and cut off all the Communications to the Town, hoping that the Scarcity of Proviſion would force the *Pariſians* to ſurrender without Bloodſhed.

But *Mayenne*, the Prieſts, and *the Sixteen* Burgeſſes managed ſo dexterouſly the Spirits of the People,

worked

work'd up their Hatred againſt the Hereticks to ſuch a Degree, and fool'd their Imagination to ſuch an Enthuſiaſm, that they choſe rather to die by Hunger, than to ſubmit.

The Friars and the Monks made a Show, which, as ridiculous as it was in itſelf, was yet of great uſe to animate the People. They made a kind of military Muſter, marching in Rank and Files, wearing ruſty Armours over their Couls, having at their Head the Figure of the Virgin *Mary*, wielding Swords in their Hands, and crying, *They were all ready to fight and to die in the Defence of the Faith.* So that the Citizens who ſaw their Confeſſors in Arms, thought really that they fought the Cauſe of God.

However, Scarcity occaſioned ſoon an univerſal Famine. The prodigious Multitude of Citizens had no other Support but the Sermons of their Prieſts, and the fictitious Miracles of Friars, who, by the way had all Things in plenty in their Convents, while all the Town was reduced to ſtarve. The miſerable *Pariſians* lull'd at firſt by the Hopes of being ſoon relieved, were ſinging Ballads in the Streets, and Lampoons againſt *Henry*; a Fact not to be related with Probability of any other Nation, but ſuitable enough to the Genius of the *French*, even in ſo deſolate a Condition. That ſhort-liv'd wretched Mirth was ſtopp'd quickly by the moſt ſerious and the moſt inexpreſſible Miſery. Thirty thouſand Men died of Hunger in a Month's time. The poor ſtarv'd Citizens tried to make a Sort of Bread with the Bones of the Dead, which being bruiſed and boiled, were reduc'd to a kind of Jelly. But ſuch an unnatural Food afforded them no other manner of Benefit than to kill them the ſooner. It is recorded and confirmed by all the Teſtimonies which can be credible, that a Woman kill'd and fed on her own Child. Moreover, the ſtubborn Obſtinacy of the *Pariſians* was equal to their Calamities. *Henry* pitied their Condition more

than

than they did themſelves; his Good-Nature prevail'd over his Intereſt.

He ſuffered his Soldiers to ſell privately all Sorts of Proviſions to the Town; thus it happened, what was never ſeen before, that the Beſiegers fed the Beſieged. 'Twas a ſingular Spectacle to ſee the Soldiers from the Bottom of their Trenches ſend up Victuals to to the Citizens, who were throwing down Money to them from the Ramparts. Many Officers, prompted by the Licentiouſneſs common to a military Life, bartered a Surloin of Beef for a Wench; ſo that one might have ſeen Women getting down in Baſkets, and the Baſkets hoiſted up again full of Proviſions. By theſe Means the Officers were taken up with an unſeaſonable Licentiouſneſs, the Soldiers got too much Money, the beſieged were relieved, and *Henry* loſt the Town. For in the mean time an Army of *Spaniards* came from the Low Countries; the King was obliged to raiſe the Siege, and run again through all the Toils and Viciſſitudes of War, till at laſt the *Spaniards* being driven out of the Kingdom, he came a third Time before *Paris*, that was ſtill more ſtrongly bent againſt receiving him.

Now the Cardinal of *Bourbon*, that Mock-King, was dead: An Aſſembly was held in *Paris* under the Name of the General States of the Kingdom to proceed to the Elections of a new King. *Spain* influenced powerfully thoſe States. *Mayenne* had a ſtrong Party, who would have plac'd the Crown on his Head. At laſt, *Henry* tired with the cruel Neceſſity of waging an eternal War againſt his Subjects, knowing beſides they hated his Religion, not him, reſolved to turn *Roman* Catholick; for the Prieſts were the only Enemies he was afraid of. Few Weeks after, *Paris* opened its Gates to him, and what his Valour and his Magnanimity could never bring about, was eaſily obtain'd by going to Maſs, and by receiving Abſolution from the *Pope*.

F I N I S.

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